



The Education Trust

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

July 13, 2015

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate,

I write today to encourage you to vote against Amendment 2162 to the Every Child Achieves Act, offered by Senator Lee of Utah.

Amendment 2162 would require states to allow students to opt — or be opted — out of statewide assessments for any reason, effectively nullifying state policies on test participation. The Commonwealth of Kentucky, for example, has made it clear that students can opt out of the state's public school system, but if they choose to attend public schools, they will participate in assessments. Amendment 2162 would undermine that decision and decisions like it across the country.

Moreover, with this amendment students who opt out would not be counted in the 95 percent participation rate requirement for a state's accountability system, thereby undermining the expectation that schools are accountable for the academic progress of *all* students. Until federal law insisted that all children be included in statewide assessments, schools could and did mask disparities by excluding certain children — especially low-income students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities — from tests. This amendment would take us back to that time.

Statewide standards, and the assessments based on them, serve as a check to ensure the vulnerable students who are the focus of federal law are not being subjected to lower expectations than their peers. These assessments help parents make informed decisions about their children's education. They allow educators to benchmark their students' performance. And they serve as a cornerstone for statewide accountability systems that expect and support all students to make progress toward college and career readiness.

We urge you to protect the integrity of state assessment and accountability systems by voting no on Amendment 2162.

Sincerely,

Kati Haycock
President